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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 000549

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STATE FOR NEA/IPA, WHA/BSC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL DISCUSSES HAMAS
AND IRAQ

REF: A. SANTIAGO 384

[B](#). STATE 37552

[C](#). STATE 27174

[D](#). STATE 28802

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Emi L. Yamauchi. Reasons: 1.4 (b and d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Foreign Ministry Director for Middle East Affairs Luis Palma told EPOL Counselor on March 16 that he believed isolating Hamas now could complicate Middle East peace efforts. Chile believes the international community should respect "the democratic will of the Palestinian people" and give Hamas a chance to moderate its ways. Palma did not know of any plans for Hamas delegations to visit Chile. However, Palma predicted the GOC would receive Hamas delegations if they did. He contended that Chile would use the visits to encourage Hamas to moderate its behavior and to recognize Israel's right to exist. Palma deplored the Askariya shrine bombing. He said the GOC had not considered issuing a statement condemning the attack, but said he would discuss the matter with senior Foreign Ministry officials. End summary.

Hamas

[2](#). (C) Econ-Pol Counselor called on Foreign Ministry Director for Middle East and Africa Affairs Luis Palma on March 15 to deliver messages on Hamas (ref. B-C) and the Askariya shrine bombing (ref. D). (Note: The Ambassador delivered the Hamas message to then-Foreign Minister Walker on February 22, and will do the same with new Foreign Minister Foxley.) Palma explained that Chile, as a democracy, believed it was important to respect "the democratic will of the Palestinian people" who elected Hamas. He asserted the peace process would stall if Hamas were isolated. Palma acknowledged that Hamas had used violence and terrorism in the past, but expressed hope the organization would moderate its behavior now that it was in power.

[3](#). (C) EPOL Counselor reminded Palma that Hamas was a terrorist organization and had not moderated its rhetoric since the elections. He cautioned Chile from presuming that Hamas would change its behavior simply because it was now in power, and encouraged Chile not to meet with Hamas. Palma replied there were no plans to meet with Hamas. He said he had heard of a "South American tour" by a Hamas delegation that included stops in Brazil and Argentina, but not Chile. However, Palma said the GOC likely would receive Hamas delegations if they asked to visit Chile. He explained the GOC would use the meetings to encourage Hamas to moderate its

rhetoric and recognize Israel's right to exist.

Iraq

¶4. (C) Palma deplored the Askariya shrine bombing in Iraq. Despite its geographic location, Chile continued to watch developments in Iraq with interest. Palma said the GOC had not considered issuing a statement following the shrine bombing, but said he would discuss the matter with Foreign Ministry Director General for External Relations Carlos Portales (the MFA's number 3 official). Speaking in general terms, Palma said he did not see a "peaceful end in sight" in Iraq. Arguing that a solution must come from within, Palma said the continued U.S. military presence fueled more hatred.

Palma, who recently returned from a visit to Syria, Jordan, and the UAE, said several of his Arab interlocutors viewed the U.S. as an "occupier," and "not an ally," of Iraq. Palma acknowledged that a complete withdrawal of U.S. forces was not the answer, but wondered if the prospects for a peaceful solution might be greater with a decreased U.S. presence.

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